

# 2019-2020 Serve Wisconsin AmeriCorps RFP Questions and Answers

Serve Wisconsin is collecting all questions that are received in writing to [servewisconsin@wisconsin.gov](mailto:servewisconsin@wisconsin.gov) regarding the AmeriCorps\*State RFP. Redacted questions and answers are posted here for your reference.

All questions must be received in writing no later than midnight on November 1, 2018. This document will be updated periodically and posted on <https://servewisconsin.wi.gov/Pages/Grants/AmeriCorpsRFP.aspx>

---

## Contents

A. Questions Raised During the Current Competition .....	1
B. Questions Raised During Previous Competitions.....	13
C. General Application Questions .....	13

## A. Questions Raised During the Current Competition

### ***A1. Do recompile applicants have to submit organizational chart and the IRS determination letter as part of their additional documents?***

Most of the time, yes. Not all recompile applicants may be required to submit an IRS determination letter if by some other means they can be determined to be in compliance with the following Board policy.

In order to be eligible for Formula funding through the Board, an applicant shall be one of the following at the time of application for Formula funds: Wisconsin state or local government entity, or one of the following if its governing body operates within the state of Wisconsin: a federally recognized Indian Tribe, a public or private nonprofit organization (organized as a tax-exempt entity under the federal IRS Code, including religious organizations and labor organizations), or an institution of higher education as defined in Wisconsin Statute 118.55(1). The only exception to this policy would be for an annual Formula process in which all other possible Formula funding options have been considered and Formula funding remains unallocated. In cases where Formula funds would otherwise remain unallocated, those funds could be provided to an entity that does not meet the requirements of this policy.

### ***A2. Are you wanting organizations that are currently formula funded to apply to the competitive RFP process for next year for their continuation?***

Due to how our current grant process, applicants wishing to pursue a formula continuation application in the spring will need to submit a notification of intent to apply by October 25. Applicants that submit a notification of intent to apply for formula continuation will receive instructions on how to submit their application in the spring.

There is no guarantee that we will release a formula RFP because we may have enough programs to fund in formula as a result of our competitive RFP process. Applicants will want to keep that in mind when deciding whether to submit a competitive application or not.

### ***A3. Can applications be created in eGrants yet? (updated 10/24/2018)***

Unfortunately, at this time, no. CNCS needs to create the appropriate NOFA in eGrants before you are able to submit an application. As of 10/16/2018 CNCS said that they expect the application to be available in eGrants towards the end of October, although it may be ready sooner. Our plan is to notify all individuals who have submitted a Notification of Intent to Apply when we are aware that the NOFA is available in eGrants. Unfortunately applicants will not be able to

create new or continuation applications application until that occurs, and we recommend that applicants draft their proposals outside of eGrants to reduce the work needed once the NOFA becomes available. If the NOFA is not available by October 31, we will be taking some sort of action to account for the incredibly short turnaround that would be required.

***A4. On page 6 of the RFP, under 1.1.3 AmeriCorps Funding Priorities, we see that in order to qualify for the Education Priority, that applicants must be assessed as having Moderate or Strong evidence as proven by Randomized Control Study Trials, etc. Our program would not fit this evidence tier, nor either of the other Funding Priority Areas. How should we proceed with addressing this question?***

Please see the Notice Priority section on page 20 of the RFP. The Notice Priority section talks about how an applicant should describe whether the program fits one or more of the funding priorities listed in section 1.1.3. On page 20 you will also see the weight, in points, that this section has in CNCS's and Serve Wisconsin's review.

***A5. Page 21 of RFP includes section C Organizational Capability-The org. details roles, responsibilities and structure of staff etc. Below this section it states: the criteria will be based on budget submitted; no narrative should be entered. So, for Section C 1; we put nothing in the narrative other than see budget?***

The sentence that reads, 'These criteria will be assessed based on the budget submitted. No narrative should be entered in the narrative box except for "See budget,"' is included in the wrong area of the RFP by mistake. It should be moved from section C on page 21 to section D on the same page.

Currently this page in the RFP looks like this. See next page.

### **C. Organizational Capability (25 percent)**

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the following criteria. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

#### **1. Organizational Background and Staffing (9 points)**

- The organization details the roles, responsibilities, and structure of the staff that will be implementing the AmeriCorps program as well as providing oversight and monitoring for the program.

**This criterion will be assessed based on the budget submitted. No narrative should be entered in the narrative box except for "See budget."**

#### **2. Compliance and Accountability (8 points)**

- The organization has a monitoring and oversight plan to prevent and detect non-compliance and enforce compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities and criminal history checks at the grantee, subgrantee (if applicable), and service site locations.
- The CNCS-required evaluation report meets CNCS requirements (if applicable).
- The CNCS-required evaluation report is of satisfactory quality (if applicable).

#### **3. Culture that Values Learning (6 points)**

- The applicant's board, management, and staff collect and use information, including performance data, for learning and decision making.

#### **4. Member Supervision (2 points)**

- AmeriCorps members will receive sufficient guidance and support from their supervisor to provide effective service.
- AmeriCorps supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations.

### **D. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 percent)**

Reviewers will assess the quality of the application's budget based on the following criteria. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

#### **1. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 points)**

- Budget is submitted without mathematical errors and proposed costs are allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the award.
- Budget is submitted with adequate information to assess how each line item is calculated.
- Budget is in compliance with the budget instructions.
- Match is submitted with adequate information to support the amount written in the budget.
- The budgeted match is equal to or more than the required match for the given program year.
- The cost per MSY is equal to or less than the maximum cost per MSY

Proposed budgets that contain MSY costs that exceed the maximum cost per MSY and/or less than required match will be considered unresponsive to the application criteria.

Applicants must complete the budget and ensure the following information is in the budget screens:

- Current indirect cost rate if used to claim indirect/administrative costs.
- Identify the non-CNCS funding and resources necessary to support the project, including for Fixed Amount applicants.
- Indicate the amount of non-CNCS resource commitments, type of commitments (in-kind and/or cash) and the sources of these commitments, and if the commitments are proposed or secured.

It should instead look like this.

### **C. Organizational Capability (25 percent)**

Reviewers will consider the quality of the application's response to the following criteria. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

#### **1. Organizational Background and Staffing (9 points)**

- The organization details the roles, responsibilities, and structure of the staff that will be implementing the AmeriCorps program as well as providing oversight and monitoring for the program.

#### **2. Compliance and Accountability (8 points)**

- The organization has a monitoring and oversight plan to prevent and detect non-compliance and enforce compliance with AmeriCorps rules and regulations including those related to prohibited and unallowable activities and criminal history checks at the grantee, subgrantee (if applicable), and service site locations.
- The CNCS-required evaluation report meets CNCS requirements (if applicable).
- The CNCS-required evaluation report is of satisfactory quality (if applicable).

#### **3. Culture that Values Learning (6 points)**

- The applicant's board, management, and staff collect and use information, including performance data, for learning and decision making.

#### **4. Member Supervision (2 points)**

- AmeriCorps members will receive sufficient guidance and support from their supervisor to provide effective service.
- AmeriCorps supervisors will be adequately trained/prepared to follow AmeriCorps and program regulations, priorities, and expectations.

### **D. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 percent)**

Reviewers will assess the quality of the application's budget based on the following criteria. Do not assume all sub-criteria are of equal value.

**These criteria will be assessed based on the budget submitted. No narrative should be entered in the narrative box except for "See budget."**

#### **1. Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (25 points)**

- Budget is submitted without mathematical errors and proposed costs are allowable, reasonable, and allocable to the award.
- Budget is submitted with adequate information to assess how each line item is calculated.
- Budget is in compliance with the budget instructions.
- Match is submitted with adequate information to support the amount written in the budget.
- The budgeted match is equal to or more than the required match for the given program year.
- The cost per MSY is equal to or less than the maximum cost per MSY

Proposed budgets that contain MSY costs that exceed the maximum cost per MSY and/or less than required match will be considered unresponsive to the application criteria.

Applicants must complete the budget and ensure the following information is in the budget screens:

- Current indirect cost rate if used to claim indirect/administrative costs.
- Identify the non-CNCS funding and resources necessary to support the project, including for Fixed Amount applicants.
- Indicate the amount of non-CNCS resource commitments, type of commitments (in-kind and/or cash) and the sources of these commitments, and if the commitments are proposed or secured.

**A6. The description for the Healthy Futures focus area on page 6 of the RFP says "Grantees will provide support for activities that will address the opioid crisis; increase seniors' ability to remain in their own homes with the same or improved quality of life for as long as possible; and/or increase physical activity and improve nutrition with the**

***purpose of reducing obesity.” Our program covers a variety of health education topics. Do we still fall under the Healthy Futures focus area even through the majority of our activities don’t fall under the topics specified?***

The RFP materials do not provide many details to determine whether an application fits into a CNCS Focus Area or not. It would be reasonable for an applicant to claim they will focus on a CNCS Focus Area if one or more of the activities listed in the focus area definition represent a significant focus of their program.

***A7. Are we allowed to call and ask general questions regarding the application or do they have to be put in writing?***

Section 2.5 of the RFP speaks to this. It says, “Any questions or inquiries concerning this RFP must be received in writing by 12:00 Midnight CT on November 1, 2018. Questions will not be accepted via telephone.” So if a question does not concern the RFP then it may be asked via telephone.

***A8. Even though we do not fit into any of the federal priorities I’m assuming we are still able to apply utilizing our own PMs?***

The performance measure requirement for programs under this RFP – at least one aligned performance measure (output paired with outcome) that corresponds to the proposed primary intervention – has not changed from previous years. However, CNCS has substantially revised the list of National Performance Measures available for programs to use in 2019. Applicants may still create their own *applicant-determined measures*.

***A9. The Application Instructions document - Continuation Requests section - states in bold "Do not modify these original narrative fields". However, this year's RFP has reduced the page limit to 10 pages, necessitating modification of the narrative fields to meet the shorter page limit. How should continuation applicants navigate this? (updated 10/26/2018)***

If you are applying for a continuation application, your original competitive application will auto populate the sections it references on page 13 of the Application Instructions and Attachments. Do not modify the text that autopopulates. The narrative page limit in the RFP does not apply to continuation applicants. You are asked not to modify your original narrative fields, and that holds true even with the reduced page limit.

Next, if you have programmatic changes that you would like to request, you may list those in the continuation changes narrative field. What you write in the continuation changes field may not exceed six pages.

***A10. On p. 11 of the Application Instructions it states, “Please add \$54 plus the cost of the state check for criminal history checks for each covered position in the CNCS share of the budget.” Historically, the budget for background checks has been budgeted as CNCS/Match combined, but I’m reading this new guidance that the criminal background check should be totally budgeted to the CNCS share much like we budget the required budgeted travel expense.***

Yes, applicants are required to budget \$54 plus the cost of the state check for criminal history checks for each covered position in the CNCS share of the budget. Applicants may not budget match dollars to meet this requirement.

As for the travel cost requirement, the application instructions say, “You must include at least \$2,000 in this line item for staff to travel to attend an AmeriCorps program/staff development training approved by Serve Wisconsin.” Those \$2,000 may be budgeted on the CNCS side, match side, or both.

***A11. I am a bit confused by Section D. Part 1: Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy of the RFP. In Section D Part 1 (page 21) it outlines all the pieces that are required for the budget and that the criterion will be accessed based on the budget submitted. As such, no narrative should be entered into this section of eGrants, but instead we should write “see budget”. As a fixed amount grant do we submit our full budget as part of the grant (if so I am not seeing where that is), or because we are a fixed amount grant do we only need to complete Attachments D and E and the Financial***



***Management Survey? If it is the later, are we addressing the criteria in section D part 1 sufficiently by only submitting the attachments and financial management survey?***

The sentences, “These criteria will be assessed based on the budget submitted. No narrative should be entered in the narrative box except for “See budget,”” are made in reference to the budget narrative that is submitted in eGrants. Not all criteria in this section will be applicable to full-time fixed amount grant applicant because the level of detail that is required in their budget is minimal. In addition, this section is not peer reviewed by Serve Wisconsin peer reviewers. Full-time fixed amount grant applicants that follow the budget instructions that pertain to fixed amount grants should sufficiently address the criteria you reference in section D.

***A12. As I review the Evaluation Plan requirements for the 2019-2020 RFP it is not clear to me what I may or may not evaluate as part of my evaluation plan. The RFP says: “If the applicant is a State/Territory subgrantee and/or National Direct Grantee whose average annual CNCS program grant is less than \$500,000, or an Education Award Program Grantee, it must conduct an internal or an external evaluation of the program, and it must submit the evaluation with any subsequent application to CNCS for competitive funds”. Does this mean I can evaluate any part of my program (whether that be success of a current Performance Measure, member satisfaction with the program, community input and feedback on host sites, etc.) as long as I include the required information as outlined on page 22 of the RFP?***

Applicants do have a good deal of flexibility in designing their evaluation. For requirements of your evaluation and expectations from CNCS see Q8 of the [Evaluation FAQ](#) document. Based on those requirements it does seem that the examples you have provided would be appropriate foci for your evaluation.

Give a quick scan of the Corporation’s [Evaluation Design](#) presentation to see if you can glean any information from it and this question might also be asked of the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (see RFP website) for their opinions.

***A13. We are a multi-site continuation program; two of our sites closed this year due to funding issues. We would like to reduce our request for members in the third year of our grant. Can we do that by addressing it in the changes narrative section and reduce the budget and program measures accordingly?***

On page 13 of the Application Instructions and Attachments it says that continuation applicants may request the changes listed below in the *Continuation Changes* narrative field as relevant:

- Changes in Operating Sites
- Significant Changes in Program Scope or Design
- Changes to Performance Measures
- Significant Changes to Monitoring Structures or Staffing
- Budget revisions (detail provided in section VI).

All the changes you are describing appear to fit in the categories CNCS has listed above. So, yes, you would be able to make those changes and describe them in the *Continuation Changes* narrative field.

***A14. Do you know if the 10,000 character limit for the evaluation plan includes spaces?***

Yes, the character limit of 10,000 for the *evaluation summary or plan* section does include spaces.

***A15. On page 38 of the RFP it states the following: Preliminary evidence means the applicant has submitted up to two outcome evaluation reports that evaluated the same intervention described in the application and yielded positive results on one or more key desired outcomes of interest as depicted in the applicant’s logic model. When the RFP states that the applicant has submitted up to two outcome evaluation reports, does that mean they have submitted two outcome evaluation reports based on their program’s own data (i.e. our performance measures and data collection) OR does it mean that the program has submitted two outcome evaluation reports from programs across the country that have a similar design to their program?***

The key phrase in the sentence you have highlighted is *same intervention*. The evaluation reports must be considered to have the same intervention described in the application and yielded positive results... To determine if the evaluation reports you wish to submit have the same intervention as you describe in the application, please see the text that is copied below from the RFP.

**Same intervention described in the application** The intervention evaluated in submitted evaluation reports must match the intervention proposed in the application in the following areas, all of which must be clearly described in the Program Design and Logic Model sections of the application:

- Characteristics of the beneficiary population
- Characteristics of the population delivering the intervention
- Dosage (frequency, duration) and design of the intervention
- The setting in which the intervention is delivered
- Outcomes of the intervention

Submitted reports that do not sufficiently match the intervention proposed by the applicant in all of these areas will not be considered applicable and will not be reviewed or receive any points.

***A16. Does National Performance Measure H18 – Number of individuals reporting a change in behavior or intent to change behavior to improve their health align with short-term outcomes? Behavior is typically a mid-term outcome, but intent to change behavior sounds like a change in willingness or attitude. I have been talking to WEC about this and they suggested I reach out to you because it seems like there are no National PMs under Health Futures that align with attitudes which is a short-term outcome. I saw in the peer reviewer’s form under the logic model section that it says attitudes are medium-term outcomes. “Outcomes that demonstrate changes in knowledge/skill (short-term), attitude/behavior (medium-term), or condition (long-term) as a result of the intervention, and, if applicable, identified National Performance Measure to be used.” Can you clarify if attitudes should be a short-term or medium-term outcome?***

Are you wondering whether to classify H18 as a short-term outcome or mid-term outcome in the logic model? If so, the RFP does not clearly define the differentiation between short, medium and long-term outcomes in the logic model. However, because the peer reviewer form makes the suggestion that attitudes are medium-term outcomes, it would be appropriate to classify an outcome measuring attitudes as a medium-term outcome.

***A17. Could I get the State Plan Alignment form in Word? When I use this PDF, fill it in and save it, everything gets deleted.***

A word document of the Additional Checklist C can be found on our website now <https://servewisconsin-auth-prod.wi.gov/Pages/Grants/AmeriCorpsRFP.aspx>.

***A18. In the RFP we noticed that you can now ask for an extension of a continuation grant. I would assume that this means that the total funding amount can increase as well, correct? Our budget has increased for next year. Can we allocate some of the new expenses to the CNCS side of the budget amount?***

The Application Instructions and Attachments on page 16 say, “Continuation applicants may apply for expansions – dollars, MSY, and/or members.” This means that continuation applicants may request more or less money on the match or CNCS side of the budget, so long as it meets other requirements like maximum cost per MSY and required budgeted match.

***A19. We understand that we have to pick a new performance measure if our current measure is not listed in the new Performance Measure Instructions. Could we decide to completely change our performance measure and select a***

***completely different measure that happens to be related to a different aspect of the program, or do we need to stick with what is on our initial application (because we are applying for a continuation grant)? (updated 10/30/2018)***

Applicants must revise their performance measures as needed to conform to the updated Performance Measure Instructions. You are not required to request to use the same performance measure(s) that were used in your original grant application, however, any proposed change to your performance measures would have to be described in the Continuation Changes field in the narrative as requested on page 13 of the Application Instructions and Attachments. As for what performance measure you should choose, I cannot comment on that while we are in this open competition because it is a program design related question. I will include a paragraph that I feel is relevant from the Performance Measure Instructions.

“All performance measures must reflect significant program activities whose outputs and outcomes are consistent with the applicant’s core theory of change. Applicants are not expected to have performance measures for every program activity. CNCS does not require applicants to use National Performance Measures but expects them to do so if National Performance Measures reflect key outputs and/or outcomes of the theory of change. Applicants may not create applicant determined outputs or outcomes that duplicate existing National Performance Measures.”

***A20. Is it okay if we submit the financial management survey (and the multiple attachments) in separate emails? The survey requires many documents that won’t all fit in one email due to size limitations.***

Yes, this is allowable. All required additional documents need to be received before the deadline, but it is acceptable to send multiple email messages if an applicant is concerned about the size of an email message.

***A21. Since the “evidence base” scoring system has changed from one year to the next, should continuation applicants update the “evidence base” section in light of the new rules, or leave their evidence base section compliant with the rules from their recompetite year?***

Please see the section at the bottom of page 13 of the Application Instructions and Attachments, which says:

Your original application will appear in the Executive Summary and in the narrative sections Rationale and Approach/Program Design, Organizational Capability, Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy, Evaluation Summary or Plan, Amendment Justification, Clarification Information, and Continuation Changes, as appropriate. Do not modify these original narrative fields.

CNCS expects that programs will maintain a consistent program design for the duration of the three-year project period; however, CNCS recognizes that, on occasion, some programmatic changes are necessary. As a result, continuation applicants may request the changes listed below during the continuation process.

Information should be provided in the Continuation Changes narrative field as relevant.

- Changes in Operating Sites
- Significant Changes in Program Scope or Design
- Changes to Performance Measures
- Significant Changes to Monitoring Structures or Staffing
- Budget revisions (detail provided in section VI).

The evidence base will be pulled in from your original grant application and applicants should not modify those original narrative fields.



**A22. For the intent to apply due-date: Is it due by 12:00 am on Thursday, 10/25 (essentially meaning 11:59 p.m. on 10/24), OR 11:59 PM on Thursday, 10/25.**

Please consider any deadline listed as midnight to mean the end of the night on the date listed. So for the midnight deadline on 10/25, applicants will have up to the end of the night on 10/25 to submit a Notification of Intent to Apply.

**A23. On page 32, in Section: 3.6, it says, “Continuation Formula applicants will be required to provide a short, 5 minute presentation to the Board’s Program Evaluation and Development Committee. I’m assuming this is the meeting in May and not December? (updated 11/2/2018)**

The sentence is best read in its entirety, “Continuation Formula applicants will be required to provide a short, 5-minute presentation to the Board’s Program Evaluation & Development Committee at the meeting during which the Committee will consider applications for Formula funding.” The Board has not set their meeting dates for 2019, so although we expect to the meeting at which the Committee to occur in the spring, we cannot be sure of the exact timeline yet. We do know, though, that Continuation Formula applicants will not be expected to present at meetings in December 2018. Applicants that submit a notification of intent to apply for formula continuation will receive instructions on how to submit their application in the spring.

**A24. If I request 25 members as part of my competitive grant for the 2019-2020 program year, but decide I want to request only 20 members in the second year of our grant (for the 2020-2021 year), is that allowable? Or if I request 25 members in our competitive grant, am I held to 25 member slots for all three years of the grant?**

I cannot speak for any future competitions, but in the current AmeriCorps competition, continuation applicants may request “Significant Changes in Program Scope or Design”. What you are describing would be considered a significant change in program scope or design under this RFP.

**A25. Can you provide clarity on the evaluation requirements as to what needs to be submitted for continuation applicants? In the past communication has been confusing as we were asked to provide more rigorous (by nature multi-year) evaluations while also seemingly being expected to submit something annually with each proposal.**

Continuation applicants are not expected to submit evaluation reports.

**A26. Can you clarify what we are supposed to put in the Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy section?**

Please write “See budget.”

**A27. The price for member went up to \$15,192; can continuations use the higher cost per member or do they have to still comply with the cost per member from the last year’s application (\$14,392)?**

The Application Instruction on page 16 say, “Continuation applicants may apply for expansions – dollars, MSY, and/or members.” Continuations may request a higher cost per MSY than their original application. As I have mentioned earlier, budget revisions from the previous application are to be described in the *Continuation Changes* narrative.

**A28. I am a bit confused because page 13 of the RFP says the Maximum cost per MSY for a full-time fixed amount grant is \$15,192, but the Application Instructions say on page 10 that the maximum match from CNCS is \$13,430 per MSY. Can you clarify what those two numbers mean?**

Table 2 of the Application Instructions and Attachments was not updated as it should have been. Here is how Table 2 of the Application Instructions should read:

Grant Type	Match Requirement
Cost Reimbursement	Minimum grantee share is 24% of program costs for the first three years. Overall grantee share of total program costs increases gradually beginning in Year 4 to 50% by the tenth year of funding and any year thereafter.
Fixed Amount	There are no specific match requirements for fixed-amount grants. Grantees pay all program costs over the maximum cost per MSY in the RFP.

**A29. Application instructions state to include \$54 per background check in the budget. I know since I became involved with the program that we have never put this figure into our budget in either the CNCS or Match column (we already have it figured out on our end). Can we still run with what we've been doing or is it now a requirement that we include the money in the budget?**

CNCS has requested this year that applicants include \$54 plus the cost of the state check for criminal history checks for all covered positions plus the cost of the state check in the CNCS share. Please follow those instructions when preparing your budget. Including \$54 budgeted for each covered position satisfies that requirement at this time unless you had reason to believe the checks would cost you more than \$54. It is unclear what CNCS is referring to when they say "plus the cost of the state check," but it may be in reference to checks that are required by states. In Wisconsin, the only additional required criminal history check is the one of the Wisconsin Circuit Court for members, which is free.

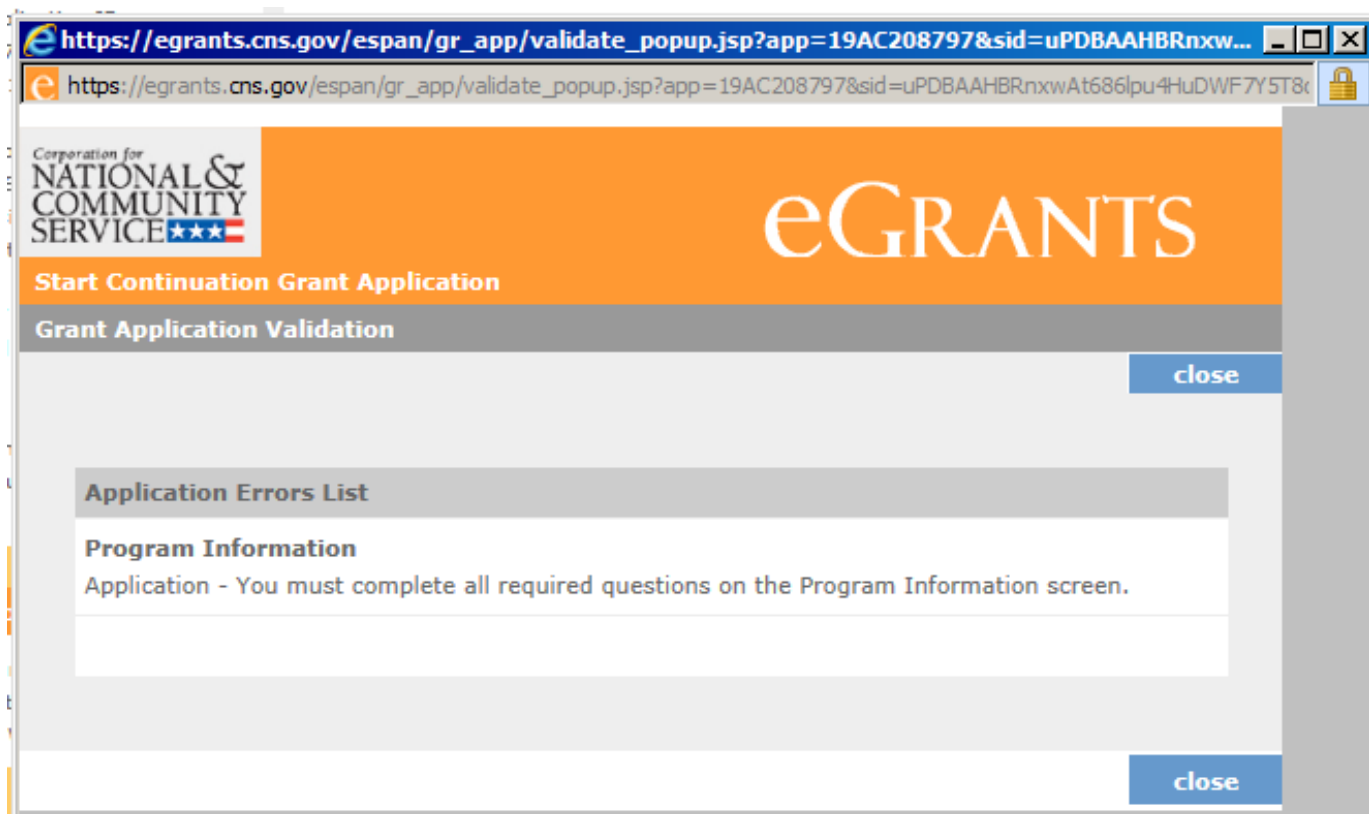
**A30. The user role I chose in eGrants is Grantee. Is there any other role I should choose?**

No you should not choose a different role. When first creating an account you will choose grantee over the peer reviewer option.

**A31. The RFP states on page 9 - Requests by existing Continuation Applicants for increases in the level of funding or number of positions will be assessed using the criteria under this RFP. If we are requesting more funding, do we just submit a "normal" continuation grant? Or do we need to submit anything extra if we are requesting additional funds?**

If you are requesting additional funds, you would be making revisions to your previous grant application budget. As such, you will need to describe those changes in the Continuation Changes section of the narrative.

**A32. I am ready to submit my application, but when trying to Verify it in the Authorize and Submit section, I'm getting the error message shown in the picture below. I've reviewed the Program Information page numerous times—re-filling each question then saving. I've tried Saving and going to Next. The page stays populated with my responses, but is not being validated. What am I missing?**



There is some sort of system-wide issue going on here with eGrants that only applies to fixed amount grant applicants. We are working with eGrants and CNCS staff to fix the problem.

***A33. My program is interested in making our members available for disaster relief efforts. How might we write this into our grant application?***

A reference to disaster relief should be included in your grant application if you wish to make your members available in times of disaster. Sample language is provided for your use below.

Grant application sample language:

AmeriCorps programs and members may participate in disaster relief. There is no cap on the amount of time programs and members may spend on disaster relief efforts during the program year; however, programs will not engage in disaster relief on such a long-term basis that the program focus significantly changes. Hours served by members responding to disaster will count toward their AmeriCorps term of service, as long as they are pre-approved by the Program Director. Disaster response on-site supervisors will track and verify AmeriCorps members' activities and hours.

Host site agreement sample language:

AmeriCorps programs and members may participate in disaster relief on a short-term (1-3 days) or long-term (4-7 days) basis. There is no cap on the amount of time members may spend on disaster relief efforts during the program year, but the amount of time spent will not take away from the program focus or the ability to meet program performance measures. Members will not be away from the host site for more than 7 days at a time, and no more than 4 times a program year. Hours served by members responding to disaster will count towards their AmeriCorps terms of service, as long as they are pre-approved by the Program Director site supervisor. Disaster response on-site supervisors will track and verify AmeriCorps members' activities and hours.

***A34. Is it acceptable to simply put (Last name, Year) as the citation format throughout the grant? i.e. (Taggart, 2015)***

There is no format specified for citations in the RFP and instructions. The method you propose seems reasonable.

**A35. What are the evaluation briefs, reports, and studies referenced in the additional checklist A? I do not see mention of the word brief or study in section 8.0 or section 2.3.3.B.2 of the RFP.**

That box on the additional document checklist is intended for documents that applicants are providing to satisfy requirements of 2.3.3.B.2 of the RFP and justify their evidence tier.

An applicant may reference many studies in the narrative portion of their application, but may only submit up to two studies, reports, etc., of the same intervention, plus an evaluation report if required. Those studies will be reviewed and an evidence tier will be assessed in conjunction with the evidence base narrative. Some applications may only reference two studies and then submit those two as additional documents, while others may have studies that are referenced but are not included along with the additional documents.

Here's a relevant snippet from the RFP:

applicants must (1) summarize the study design and key findings of any evaluation report(s) submitted and (2) describe any other evidence that supports their program, including past performance measure data and/or other research studies that inform their program design. Applicants who submit evaluation reports for consideration must also describe in the Evidence Base section of the application narrative how the intervention described in the submitted reports is the same as the intervention described in the application (see section 8.0).

**A36. I am in the process of submitting an application for AmeriCorps and have come across a question regarding submission of one of the documents. The Theory of Change appears to be an important and necessary component of the application, yet there is nowhere in the eGrants portal to enter this document information and there are no other instructions that I can find. Can you tell me how/where to submit the theory of change?**

The Theory of Change, and all of the narrative required under 2.3.3.B of the RFP for that matter, should be entered into the Rationale and Approach/Program Design section in eGrants under the Narratives section.

**A37. This is "Evaluation" references the Evaluation Plan or Evaluation Report?**

Document Status List: ? add a new

✓ status entered    ➔ status not entered

Document Name	Document Status	delete
➔ Evaluation	Not Sent ▼	
➔ Labor Union Concurrence	Not Sent ▼	
➔ Other Documents	Not Sent ▼	

This is referring to an evaluation report, because CNCS has built their system to accommodate an evaluation plan in that narrative portion of the grant application.

**A38. The budget form for our proposal is telling me that I cannot exceed a Cost per MSY of \$14,932 however the RFP says the MSY limit is \$15,192. Should I ignore this error?**

Yes, ignore that error. Applicants should instead adhere to the maximum cost per MSY that is stated in the RFP.

**A39. I wasn't able to "check" all of the boxes in the Financial Management Survey, so I printed out the survey and marked the boxes by hand. Is this okay?**

Yes, that is fine. There is no requirement to fill out the Financial Management Survey electronically. I am sorry to hear you had errors with the form. Some people have had success, others have not. The PDF software is finicky at times.

## **B. Questions Raised During Previous Competitions**

**B1. Can you apply if you are receiving AmeriCorps funds through a National Direct application?**

Yes, an organization that currently receives AmeriCorps members through a National Direct program may apply for their own AmeriCorps program through Serve Wisconsin.

**B2. Is there a minimum number of Member Service Years (MSY) that we can request?**

No, Serve Wisconsin prefers to make awards to organizations engaging 10 or more *members*, but there is no minimum number of MSY that you can request.

**B3. Are grantees able to pay stipends under this grant? If so, what slots are able to receive stipends?**

Yes, programs may pay a living allowance to members in any slot type, and must provide a living allowance to full-time members. Review the RFP for information about the minimum and maximum amounts for the living allowances.

**B4. Will we be held to the number of members our program plans as noted on the Notice of Intent to Apply form? If we submit for 10-20, but realize after we want to bump up to 10-20, would that change be allowable in our grant application?**

The Notice of Intent to Apply does not obligate you to anything. It is simply a mandatory step for applicants.

**B5. How do we know if we need to submit a cost allocation plan?**

Applicants would only be expected to provide a cost allocation plan if they use one to determine how costs will be allocated to their grant. Consider asking someone familiar with the accounting for your program to determine if you will be using a cost allocation plan when charging expenses to the grant.

**B6. For the Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy bullet points, which are listed in section 2.3.3.D of the RFP, do we need to write a specific, separate narrative providing additional explanation about our submitted budget, or are these are the criteria our submitted budget will be reviewed on?**

Regarding the Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy section, peer reviewers will not be asked to review those criteria, so if an applicant were to include narrative addressing the criteria in that section that narrative would not be sent to peer reviewers because it would be irrelevant to the sections they have been asked to review.

This is supported by the RFP. The beginning of the Cost Effectiveness section says, "Reviewers will assess the quality of the application's budget based on the following criteria..."

## **C. General Application Questions**

**C1. Do I register for an individual or system account on SAM?**

You should register for an individual account. Follow the directions in the SAM User Guide:

[https://www.sam.gov/sam/SAM\\_Guide/SAM\\_User\\_Guide.htm](https://www.sam.gov/sam/SAM_Guide/SAM_User_Guide.htm)

***C2. I work in a school and had to undergo a background check. Do I still need [National Service Criminal History Checks]?***

Yes, if your personnel expenses will be funded with grant funds (meaning, CNCS share OR Grantee share), you must complete the two or three point National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) prior to charging any time to the grant.

***C3. If CNCS funds are used only by my organization but member agencies contribute matching funds to cover their local agency's involvement, do we need to budget for criminal background checks for all staff involved, or just our organization's?***

Individuals who are required to have multi-component National Service Criminal History Checks (NSCHC) run on them are those who work or serve in a covered position. A covered position is those who are funded, partially or wholly, by federal funds or shown as match (in-kind or cash) on the grant. So, for example, if you have organization staff who will be charging in-kind time to the grant, a NSCHC is required. If, however, that individuals will be involved in discussions and working on the program but not charging any of their time as federal or match, then a NSCHC is not required.

***C4. Where do I get an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement?***

Indirect cost rates may be negotiated with either the federal cognizant agency or a state agency. The federal cognizant agency is typically the federal agency with the largest direct dollar value of federal awards; however Institutions of Higher Education use HHS or DOD and Tribal Governments use DOI.

If CNCS is cognizant, send an email to [Indirectcostrate@cns.gov](mailto:Indirectcostrate@cns.gov), and instructions will be sent to you on the steps necessary to negotiate an indirect cost rate.

***C5. Do I use my name or my superintendent's name when applying?***

The applicant's authorized representative must be the person who submits the application. The authorized representative must be using eGrants under his or her own account in order to sign and submit the application. A copy of the governing body's authorization for this official representative to sign must be on file in the applicant's office.

***C6. What is an organizational chart?***

It is a chart that shows the staffing structure of your organization.

***C7. If we hire a consultant, do I need to factor in their mileage in the budget?***

This is entirely up to you.

***C8. Can someone review my proposal prior to submission?***

Serve Wisconsin staff may not review any part of the application or provide any feedback prior to submission once the RFP has been released. You will need to find someone you know or work with to complete a review.

***C9. Who should sign the Assurances and Certifications?***

The Authorized Representative for the organization needs to be the one to review and sign the Assurances and Certifications and submit the application in eGrants.